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Document Study

‘Agitate, Educate, Organise’: the IRA’s *An tOglach*, 1965-68

An tOglach of the 1960s was the internal organ of the Irish Republican Army, a journal available only to IRA members themselves.¹ It was based on the journal of the original Irish Volunteers, its title retained by both the anti-Treaty IRA and the Free State Army for rival periodicals during the 1920s. The IRA continued to publish a journal of this name during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.² *An tOglach* in its 1960s’ incarnation is of interest because it was published during a period when the IRA leadership was attempting to orient itself towards involvement in social agitation. The journal allows us to examine how these arguments were presented to IRA volunteers, the range of issues that the movement was interested in and its first steps towards engagement with trade unionism. Much of what has been written about republicanism in the 1960s has been influenced by partisan accounts such as Seán MacStiofáin’s *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* or Roy Johnston’s *Century of Endeavour*.³ Most historians and commentators have broadly accepted, though often for differing reasons, that republican politicisation saw a gradual ‘winding down of the IRA’ – an attempt to ‘take the gun out of Irish politics’ by a leadership whose ‘priority was the reform of the Northern Ireland state, not its abolition.’⁴ These assertions have contributed to the notion that those pushing the left-wing shift, such as IRA leader Cathal Goulding, were ‘woolly radicals dreaming of a national liberation front.’⁵ A study of *An tOglach* helps clarify some of these claims.

The clandestine nature of the publication means that few copies have survived; it was not deposited in libraries or archives. Finance and logistical problems meant that its publication remained irregular. IRA volunteers were ordered to ‘ensure that only Army men see this paper’ and never to ‘discuss any matter that is in *An tOglach* with anyone who is not a member of the Army.’⁶ Copies captured by the police or held by private individuals are thus our only source for this publication.

‘Call yourself a Revolutionary?’

The first edition in January 1965 issued a dramatic call to arms, its headline screaming ‘Start the Revolution Now’ and explaining that ‘the IRA needs men, men who are not dreamers, men who are not wasters . . . in short **REAL MEN**’ in order to prepare for ‘a **SUCCESSFUL** campaign in the future.’ But there was also a more reflective look at the movement’s recent history within its pages. The journal asked its readers ‘what kind of a man are you? Can you truthfully call yourself a Soldier? More important still can you truthfully call yourself a Revolutionary?’, and called it for a ‘self-examination . . . remember **It Is** 1965 . . . having been out in the forties or fifties is not a good enough excuse for resting on your oars.’ The journal asked volunteers to consider why they had joined the IRA and wondered if it was ‘because you want to be a hero’ or to ‘be in something “tough?”’ The author contended that, ‘unless you’re nuts’, it was because they desired a united Irish republic. They had to ask themselves how this was to be achieved. Was it to be through a ‘fight in the North, kill and be killed – wrap the green flag round me – wave the banners – get the blood up and the Irish people will follow?’ If that was the case then volunteers were exhorted to ‘**GET THIS TECHNICOLLOUR FILM OUT OF YOUR MIND** now, it is unrealistic, stupid, childish. Remember military campaigns have taken place before and were unsuccessful. It needs something more than a military campaign alone to win the majority of the people to our side.’⁷ It was now emphasised that an Irish ‘Republic without **LIBERTY** and **EQUALITY** would not be worth fighting for’ and hence

the key task for volunteers was to begin 'fighting injustice and inequality now, in your district. This is where you start the Revolution.'⁸

The importance of the co-operative movement in farms and fisheries was emphasised so that in the long term 'control and leadership' would be placed in 'the hands of the producers' themselves. Dramatically illustrating this point, *An tOglach* stressed that 'we are at a turning point in our history. Failure to reverse the population trend which has held since the Famine will result in our death as a nation.' 1965 saw republicans become involved in several of the co-operative projects then emerging as part of the 'Save the West' campaign, and in Fr James McDyer's Glencolmcille effort. The IRA also took a direct role in agitation against the sale of land in Midleton, Co. Cork, in support for strikers at the Dundalk Engineering Works and housing protest in the Griffith Barracks campaign in Dublin.⁹ The paper explained that the Midleton campaign 'would not be in existence but for the initiative displayed by Cork Command in picketing the auction rooms', and though the IRA was not actually in the leadership of the protests, it was setting the pace of its demands. Units were asked 'how many more Midletons are hiding their lights under bushels?' It was stressed that in any such campaigns, 'occasions may arise when the full resources of the Army will be needed to protect the peoples' gains from counter attack.'¹⁰

'The burning question'

Along with this greater engagement in social activity the IRA had been discussing future political strategy including 'the burning question of entering Leinster House.' Recommendations from a republican conference on the way forward were distilled into ten points and an Extraordinary IRA Convention was held on 5 June 1965 to discuss them. The recommendation to allow the taking of seats in the Dublin parliament was guaranteed to produce dissension, and in the May 1965 number of *An tOglach*, Cathal Goulding, under his internal codename 'C. MacNeill', addressed a special pre-convention message to all IRA volunteers.¹¹ He urged them to study the ten recommendations 'without emotion or prejudice.' They should be aware that 'some of our finest' were in favour of taking seats in the Dáil, just as 'some of our finest' were opposed. He asked that they all give it their 'maturest thought [and] give a reasoned and fair reply.' In particular Goulding urged that 'should it happen that you are against the recommendation – you must not regard those who favour it as traitors; should it happen that you favour the recommendation you must not regard your opponents in the matter as either stupid or traditionalist. You will debate this question, as all others, with comrades and friends, not with enemies.' He stressed to those unsure about change that 'today we grapple with problems that are no longer clear-cut. To the youth, which must be attracted to our standards if we are to win, many of our attitudes are doctrinaire, to them we are bound in a tradition sanctified by time rather than reason.' Goulding stressed that

without a solid and real basis in and among the people our efforts will again come to nothing . . . to those who doubt the value of this social work I can only urge the reading of any history of a modern revolutionary movement. Read of Cuba, of Algeria, of Cyprus. We depend on an armed people for success. But first we must arm the people to combat the foreign take-over, the foreign landlord.

He reassured volunteers that 'the next military campaign will be the final one. I work for that now. [But] our new and vital orientation in the fields of co-operation and land [are] laying the basis for our future effort in the North.'¹² However, Goulding's pleas were not enough to prevent those opposed to ending abstentionism from winning the day at the convention.¹³

Education

The May 1965 issue also contained a 'Profile of the volunteer of the Sixties', who it described as typically 'young, patriotic and determined to free the country from British occupation . . . fit and

familiar with the use of arms.' But a volunteer's task could now involve not just weapons training but 'having a pier rebuilt so that fishermen can land their fish . . . getting a University for Derry rather than Coleraine, [or] preventing a town being sold up [and] assuming the leadership in a builders' strike.' If republicans took the lead on these issues, the 'prestige and influence of the Movement' would increase. It stressed that the new emphasis on social agitation did not imply 'any opportunist political solution.' In order to convince the rank and file of the value of these activities, the GHQ set up an Education Department structure. All units were told that 'the first essential step is the appointment of any Army Officer responsible for Education. This is to be taken as an official order from GHQ . . . the idea is that each area shall have one specialist who understands the nature of British rule in Ireland in *all* its aspects.' *An tOglach* emphasised that to 'fight the cheque-book is going to require a high order of skill. The enemy is not going to be so obliging as to make it easy for us to shoot at him with a gun.' Therefore units needed to appoint someone who understood the importance of 'economic intelligence' – of questions like 'where is land being sold up to foreigners [and] what is the likely effect of a proposed new factory on the economy of the area?'¹⁴ It was also important to 'broaden the scope of the ordinary military training' so that 'no training session will be complete without some time spent on understanding how to make the national revolution.' It would be necessary to learn 'how to resist evictions, how to make foreign ownership of land unpopular, how to organise a co-operative business, how to run a Trade Union Branch.' Belfast man Bobby McKnight was appointed to oversee this process, but initially only Dublin and Cork appointed Education Officers as ordered. The title of 'Political Education Officer' was revised after concerns that it 'might be misunderstood.' However some training sessions had taken place covering historical and economic topics. In theory all units were to discuss the latest *United Irishman* and *An tOglach* at their parades and ensure that volunteers had 'done their homework' on the political issues raised in the movement's publications. The role of the IRA's Director of Education would be to 'get round the units over a period of time' and sit in on and contribute to educational sessions and enthuse local areas on the new direction.¹⁵

As part of the education process *An tOglach* discussed various concepts of revolution. The 1916 Rising was still held up by many republicans as an example of how a 'small group of determined men' could initiate a revolution. But the paper reminded its readers that 1916 was 'preceded by 1913 and occurred during 1914–1918' and 'was led by one of the most remarkable groups of men who ever led a rising. They were in fact fit to be the government of the country . . . can this be said of the present movement?' The model developed in the 1793–98 and 1919–21 periods was seen as much more promising. There a 'broadly based national movement' had aimed at 'achieving power with the support of the whole people in arms.' To bring about that situation in the 1960s was 'going to take time' and 'during this period the role of the Army in its traditional form will be to keep itself as a trained body, ready to expand and pass its experience on to others when the situation demands that the people as a whole be armed in order to complete the job.' But there remained a role for guerilla warfare in this project, provided lessons were learned from Ireland and elsewhere. The guerilla needed to be close to the people, to understand people's needs, receive their support and thereby create a 'liberated area.' *An tOglach* contended that all the revolutionary successes of recent times like 'China, Vietnam in both the Vietminh and Viet Cong periods, Algeria, Cyprus [and] Cuba' had fulfilled these conditions. After all, it noted, 'Guevara is the present Cuban Minister for Finance and Mao is of course the present Chinese Prime Minister.' Significantly, it was noted that in the 1956–62 border campaign 'none of the above conditions' were met. There had been no 'liberated area', though it was stressed that 'there were many areas' that were 'relatively safe due to local support, but nowhere was there an organised revolutionary government actually administering the life of the people, as took place here in 1921, or in Cuba in Oriente Province.'¹⁵ Even then it was conceded that while 'the 1921 period fulfilled all the conditions for success', there was a major exception in 'the

North-East, where the enemy was able to count on mass support.' The existence of 'this mass support made the Partition "solution" feasible and desirable from the enemy point of view.' While *An tOigach* contended that mass support for partition was by 'no means inevitable', and that James Connolly had united workers in Belfast during 1911, that unity 'was allowed to lapse and the power of patronage made itself felt in later years.' The article concluded that 'the successful completion of the Irish national revolution [is] going to depend on the movement building good relations with disaffected elements among the present supporters of Unionism. This means basically the Belfast working class, many of whom support Labour.' It was confidently stated that 'the crumbling of Unionist support is only beginning, *but it has in fact begun*.' The IRA could aid this by 'looking for areas where Protestants are being damaged by the present regime. These areas are on the increase.' There was growing disaffection because the 'plum jobs of the Belfast engineering industry, once the crown of the patronage structure, have fallen on evil days and their future is uncertain.' The fact that some Derry Unionists had joined protests against the establishment of a new university at Coleraine rather than in Derry itself was seen as hopeful; 'the united protests of all sections of the Derry population over the Stormont treatment of their city would have been undreamed of five years ago.'¹⁷

In praise of 'the poor old faithful rifle'

The new politics did not mean that sight was lost of the practicalities of maintaining an illegal army. In an article on weapons storage it was stressed that any 'future campaign depends on preparation now' and units should be locating dumps, and procuring arms and transport.¹⁸ Knowledge of a unit's dumps should be 'confined to minimum number of people' as 'the Army cannot afford the loss of a single weapon, nor can it afford the loss in morale and prestige consequent on a successful police search.' The June 1965 issue contained an article in praise of the 'poor old faithful rifle' – the 'tall one with the brown skirt and the simple name' – which was being neglected by young volunteers entranced by talk of machineguns and bazookas. The use of the rifle in past campaigns was celebrated and it was noted that when 'the Irgun belted the British out of Palestine' the main weapons were rifles captured from the British. 'Cyprus, Algeria, Cuba are all repeats.' The 'good rifleman is an artist . . . he is to the column what Christy Ring would have been to a Hurling team and he will be as familiar with his rifle as Christy Ring was with his hurley.' The rifle was 'hot stuff . . . she's proven stuff. She's deadly.'¹⁹ For all the emphasis on education, social agitation and the need to take into account the Protestant working class, the word 'socialism' was not mentioned in any of the articles.

Trade unions

1966 saw the centenary of the 1916 Rising and a major effort was made by the IRA to benefit from the increased interest in republicanism. The year also saw the jailing of Goulding and IRA Adjutant-General Seán Garland, with significant strategy documents captured on the latter. These included notes on intervention in the unions, where it was stressed that it was of 'fundamental importance that the movement assume an organizational form that will attract back people of national outlook in the trade union movement so that their efforts can be co-coordinated.' It was felt that there should be 'an organization of representatives in the trade union movement . . . with a view to making trade unions more revolutionary'; this organization would not necessarily be a branch of IRA GHQ, but would be under the 'control and direction of the Chief of Staff.' The IRA held an educational conference on trade unionism in December 1965 at which forty volunteers were present,²⁰ and in January 1966 organized a Dublin Trade Unionists Conference. The following month, the IRA organized another conference on trade unionism in the six counties. Optimistically, it was felt that if republican links with trade unions could be solidified in the North, then it would represent a 'major national victory' that would make the Unionist government 'shiver.'²¹ Encouragingly the Belfast Trades' Council was represented at both that city's Easter commemoration and at Bodinstown in June.²² However,

progress was slow and there were other issues and problems occupying the IRA's time. Discussions about discrimination in the North and the housing crisis in Dublin would result in the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the Dublin Housing Action Committee during 1967. That year the IRA also declared itself in favour of a 'Democratic Socialist Republic.' *An tOglach* was revived by Garland and Mick Ryan in October 1967 and now reflected a more open identification with socialist ideology.²³

'Agitate, Educate, Organise'

The October 1967 issue noted that Ireland's

experience as a Nation struggling to free itself, has an almost unique position in the world. We have had many and varied kinds of movements; — leagal (sic) and illegal, underground and open, narrow circles and mass movements, each of which according to their time and circumstances, used tactics which were sometimes military, sometimes political to achieve their ends . . . for seven hundred years Ireland has been engaged in a ceaseless and heroic struggle for national liberty, a struggle which is still unfinished; which is now perhaps, only entering its last and most glorious phase, that of a struggle for a free and independent worker/farmer Republic.

It was stressed that in 'the writings of Connolly we have a guide line. He saw Ireland ruled by moneylords depending on the British connection for support, this is the situation today.' It was not enough, according to the next issue, 'to be vaguely sympathetic towards Labour, if there is to be any future for the Irish people as a free people it must depend on a return to organised Labour and the politics of Connolly.'²⁴ The role of republicans would be to 'fight native gombeenism in all its aspects. The fight for housing, jobs, small farmers, rights of workers must all be fought together' with the ultimate aim of the 'destruction of the capitalist system.' This fight also vindicated 'the traditional physical force policy of the Republican movement.' While in the past the IRA had 'made the mistake of concentrating on armed force', in the future it was important to make the 'reverse mistake, because in the final analysis . . . we will have no alternative but to fight to destroy it [capitalism].'

The failure of 1956–62 campaign was discussed, but it was emphasised that this failure was 'no reflection on the many brave and great men who organized, planned and fought . . . against the British Forces of Occupation [in] the greatest sustained effort for freedom since 1920.' But now the IRA knew 'it is not enough to have men with guns in their hands. They must be men who know what this struggle is about, that it is not for the rocks and the fields but for people we fight.' To do this would require a study of Connolly and Liam Mellows and education so that the 'attitudes and beliefs, shame and a base humility and an inferiority complex which is engrained in the Irish people' would be 'wiped out completely.' Officers had to encourage 'Revolutionary Thinking' and 'Agitate, Educate, Organise' among their volunteers.²⁵ Growing involvement in housing campaigns was reflected in a report on the activity of the IRA in Derry, where 'an Army section actually helped the occupants of houses threatened with eviction to barricade their homes, and actually stayed with the family for a week to help them resist eviction.'²⁶ Wider lessons were learnt from the campaign in Dublin, where

the present housing agitation . . . is slowly revealing the fact that the people have no control over capital investment — that the Capitalists in the building industry invest their capital in office blocks where return on capital is greatest and the workers who create the capital by their labour, are left without houses.²⁷

Some of the problems republicans faced in re-orientating activity towards organised labour were reflected a December 1967 article, 'Learning Lessons from Failures.' This bemoaned how the movement been unable to respond effectively to the closure of two factories that autumn. Rawson's shoe factory in Dundalk closed down after a fire, leaving 500 workers unemployed, while 80 lost their jobs at the Electra lamp manufacturers in Dublin.²⁸ As far as *An tOglach* was concerned, the only positive was that workers had learnt of the IRA's concerns for these issues. But at Rawsons the

IRA had let 'the grass grow under our feet. It was some weeks before we convened a meeting of workers; by then the machinery had been removed and the organising of a productive sit-in was not practicable.' In Dublin 400 people took part in a march and protest meetings in Dundalk were organised by the Irish Shoe and Leather Workers' Union.²⁹ While the IRA considered that these protests were effective in drawing attention to the workers' case, it felt that the unions had failed to follow up on this. *An tOglach* asked whether it would have been practicable to get

a deputation of workers to tour all the Shoe Factories in the country explaining to them that this was the consequence of the Free Trade Agreement and that the fire was only a pretext? And that their turn would come next . . . Why was this not done? Firstly, because we are not aware of things before they happen as we should be with a good Economic intelligence network.

If the IRA had acted earlier 'it would have set up a group of members of the movement in the Industry to become knowledgeable in its inner affairs, who would be able in the event of a closure, to come forward and formulate realistic demands to save the Industry in the interests of local people.' It could have been possible to suggest 'organising a workers co-operative and leasing the premises? By putting this question to the State, the issue becomes clear to all as to whose interests the State stands for.'³⁰

In the case of Electra, 'a foreign firm, which has taken State money', it should have been possible to alert people to the dangers of foreign control. But the IRA's weakness had been 'lack of advance information, also lack of any feeling of urgency or responsibility among the members of the local unit of the Movement, with one or two honourable exceptions.' The IRA admitted lacking 'channels of information and influence with the Dublin T.U. leadership. We were looking at the situation from the outside.' If the IRA had a 'well-oiled Trade Union orientated machine in Dublin, we could have introduced motions to the Trades Council' demanding committees of enquiry into cases of closures, procedures for resisting closures and calling for go-slows and strikes in other related firms. The first step to remedying these weaknesses was 'building a central register of Trade Union members and their organising into conscious pressure-groups where they can be effective.'³¹

An tOglach provided a guide to the trade union movement in Ireland and stressed that 'all Republicans who are employees should be members of their appropriate trade union.' They should not simply be passive members, 'paying dues and nothing else; they should be active and adopt a leadership role in every situation that comes their way.' Where 'a job, factory or office is not organised . . . Republicans should seek to change this.' *An tOglach* claimed that 'Ireland is one of the best "unionised" nations in the world – some 52% of the labour force are organised, which compares favourably with 36% or so in Britain.' This meant that 'proportionately' Ireland had the second largest voluntarily unionised workforce in the world. However, there was a further problem:

for too long now Trade Union executives have abdicated their role as Leaders of organised labour and reneged on their revolutionary aim to give workers control of Industry. Yet, all the time they claim to be followers of Connolly . . . Connolly would not have sat silent and done nothing when the 26-co. puppet Government of Capitalism and Imperialism was passing anti-worker legislation . . . this Leadership failure can only be corrected by Rank-and-file action against these measures which are a preparation to "STABILISE" the Labour market to assure the speculators of the E.E.C. of "Labour Peace" for this proposed merger of our Economy with Europe.³²

Workers' Republic

As part of the movement's union intervention, the IRA's Dept of Intelligence was being reorganised so that volunteers would 'Begin to Observe, to Listen, to Read, and to learn with the one object of building an efficient machine to destroy our enemies.' Intelligence was not simply military but also 'economic [and] social', and IRA members should strive to discover 'what do members of your Trade Union think of the Union Officials? Are the Officials or any members sympathetic to the

Army?’³³ There remained differences in emphasis on how to intervene in both trade union and broader labour politics. Sean MacStoifáin had recommended burning Rawson’s parent company in England in retaliation for the closure, a suggestion eventually rejected by the leadership after some consideration.³⁴ The variety of socialist ideology being adopted was also in flux. *An tOglach* explained that

the formulation ‘Democratic Socialist Republic’ in accordance with the 1916 Proclamation is one which emerged during the past few years and is not the last word in precision. The 1916 Proclamation contains a reference to ‘cherishing all the children equally’ and in this sense it can be taken as socialist by implication, but the principles are not spelled out.

However, the IRA’s socialism was rooted in Irish conditions, with Tone, Connolly and (James) Stephens as important as Marx and Lenin:

if Socialism were imposed on us from outside it would be as alien as the British Imperial Capitalism which has been imposed on us from the outside. The foreign Capitalist system can only be destroyed and replaced by a Native conception of Socialism. Hungary is a classic example of this. In short, nobody can appreciate been freed by the scruff of the neck.³⁵

In practical terms this led to Sinn Féin denouncing the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, stressing that ‘socialism . . . can only flourish under conditions of national independence.’³⁶ There was also a wariness about identifying with any one tendency; ‘involvement in the ideological (sic) differences of Leninists, Stalinists, Trotskyites and Maoists etc., does not advance the cause of socialism in Ireland. These quarrels are foreign to our people and only confuse them and give a bad image of Socialism, presenting it as an ideology (sic) of splits.’ Despite this, there were a variety of left-wing views represented within the IRA and Goulding was making a determined effort to connect with the Irish Workers’ Party. Roy Johnston, a key figure in the IRA’s Education Department, had warned in 1967 that adopting the slogan of the ‘workers’ republic’ and using it in an ‘exclusive, sectarian sense’ was likely to alienate ‘working farmers and small business in the self-employed or owner-manager category.’³⁷ But the Easter 1968 IRA Army Council statement explicitly described the ‘Workers’ Republic’ as the movement’s aim and ‘Sinn Féin – Workers’ Republic’ was actually emblazoned on the banner of Sinn Féin in Waterford, one of the most left-wing areas.³⁸

Fear of association with collectivization of land led to assurances to small farmers that the ‘principle unit of production will be the family farm organised in a group which will enjoy the use of co-operative purchasing, marketing and other services. Family farms will either be owned outright or leased from the state by suitable applicants.’ Large holdings would only be divided if units of land-ownership in the area were judged too small. All forms of business ownership would continue to exist. Fishing and farming co-operatives continued to feature strongly in republican discourse:

the Co-op and Credit Union movement teaches people to realize their own power and potential when they work in harmony towards a common aim. It will follow as a logical consequence that the fallacy of the sacred ‘right of property’ wealth, land etc will be shattered and the fallacy that only a certain class have the ability and the right to control production, marketing and credit, will be exploded.³⁹

While volunteers were urged to identify with international struggles (‘we must remember that Tone - who was the father of Irish Republicanism - was an Internationalist’), it was continually asserted that their main task was at home:

it is right to support the Vietnamese and other people fighting American Imperialism . . . but it would be much better if we studied the Vietnamese and these other struggles and tried to emulate them in Ireland . . . the most positive contribution they [volunteers] can make to the defeat of Imperialism must be made on their own home ground.

An tOglach criticised those socialists

An tOglach

EDITORIAL

ARMY COUNCIL STATEMENT

EASTER 1968

On this day, 52 years ago, a small group representing a minority of the people rose in arms against British Imperialism in Ireland and proclaimed the Irish Republic. In their Proclamation they laid down the basis of a Constitution which guaranteed to cherish all the children of the Nation equally and guaranteed equal rights and opportunities to all its' citizens and declared the ownership of Ireland to the people of Ireland.

We now review 52 years later how Ireland, North and South stands in relation to this Proclamation: Whether all the Children of the Nation are cherished equally: Whether there are equal rights and equal opportunities for all: and whether the ownership of Ireland is vested in the people of Ireland.

The last 12 months has seen a continuation of the betrayal of both the Country and the Ideals for which these men died. We see the re-appropriation of the Land of Ireland by foreign absentee Landlords who take with £'s, Francs and Dollars what the Armed might of British-Imperialists could not hold. In this sell-out of our Land and Industry to foreign cartels can be seen the influence of the decision already taken, that we must enter this monopolist union of robbers whether we like it or not. Although the immediate dangers of entry to the E.E.C. have receded for the time being, the 'Free Trade Agreement' with England is a fact. This Agreement is simply a re-imposition of the Act of Union, and its' economic effects are felt each month with the closures and mergers which leave a high percentage of redundancy and unemployment in their wake.

IT IS THE DUTY OF THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT TO FIGHT THESE SELLOUTS WITH EVERY MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL AND TO MAKE TRADE-UNIONISTS AND FARMERS AWARE OF THESE THREATS TO THEIR FUTURE.

Rather than tying ourselves closer to the British Economy, the recent International Monetary crisis emphasises the vital necessity to - Break the link with Sterling and all Social, Economic and Political ties with the dis-integrating British Empire.

The Economic restrictions announced in the British Budget apply automatically to the Six-County area and will cause further unemployment in already depressed areas of the North.

who frown on Nationalism and are always looking abroad for inspiration in policy, tactics, and even for an Imperialist enemy . . . National Liberation in any country is in itself a fight against Imperialism (and) Irishmen and Irishwomen can make their most effective contribution to world socialism by attacking the Imperialism that effects us most, that is, British Imperialism.

There was little sympathy for the leftward moving Irish Labour Party:

the use of the term 'Democratic Socialism' by Brendan Corish & Co., to distinguish themselves from the 'other crowd' who base themselves consistently on Marxism . . . is a phoney façade which attempts to buy some radical reputability for a party that is as Conservative as could be . . . let no one be deceived into thinking that the Socialism of the Irish Labour Party or the British one for that matter, has anything in common with the ideals of Connolly.⁴⁰

Guerrilla warfare

It was revolutionary change that the IRA sought: '[the] only way to gain freedom for the Irish people was to destroy the establishment . . . all our agitation, political action, trade union action etc., must be viewed in this light. The ultimate objective is not to reform but to destroy the British Imperial Capitalist System.' 'Economic Resistance' was 'but a step on the road that leads to an armed and determined people, led by dedicated revolutionaries who will take what they would not be given.'⁴¹ Military force would be necessary for the struggle that was to come: 'it is vital that every Volunteer be trained physically and mentally in all aspects of Revolutionary tactics, both Political and Military.'⁴² *An tOglach* published extracts from Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare*, explaining that 'whilst all the material printed may not apply to the particular situation that obtains in this country Volunteers can derive tremendous benefit from reading and applying most of the lessons "Che" teaches.' The Cuban revolution had proven 'people's ability to free themselves from an unjust and oppressive government through guerrilla warfare.' Guevara was quoted as arguing that 'one does not have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise: it can be created.' In some circumstances it was actually 'desirable to have the enemy, wittingly or not, break the peace first.' This echoed a suggestion by *An tOglach* that 'repressive measures on the part of the state against the common people will in its turn provoke the people to take more extreme measures in pursuance of their rights.'⁴³

Various sabotage and ambush techniques involving the use of mines and automatic weapons were described. The Easter 1968 edition contained instructions on how to make Molotov cocktails - 'an incendiary bomb used for assault purposes' - and detailed diagrams and instruction on the Walther P.38 and the Beretta automatic pistols.⁴⁴ Another issue stressed the need to develop intelligence on the 'Enemies of Freedom . . . the Special Branch', who were 'the front line of defence of the Establishment in this country . . . every Volunteer must know everything there is to know about the members of this force.' The 'destruction of the Irish Republican Army' was the objective of the Branch, and to combat it the IRA needed to be 'as ruthless and as efficient in our fight to make the Revolution.' Local IRA officers were ordered to collect names, addresses, dates of birth, place of birth, wife's maiden name, names and ages of children, details of personal habits and movements, etc. and, if possible, photographs of officers and their families.⁴⁵

Army of the People?

Intelligence gathering and arms training increasingly had a practical application as the IRA grew in confidence. During May 1967 the IRA bombed two Territorial Army centres in Belfast and Lisburn. In early January 1968 it bombed the Territorial HQ on Belfast's Malone Road.⁴⁶ In May of that year, during a strike at the American owned EI plant in Shannon, the IRA destroyed buses being used to ferry strikebreakers in a series of attacks in Limerick, Louth, Meath, Clare and Dublin.⁴⁷ At the Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodinstown a few weeks later, Seán Garland made clear that the

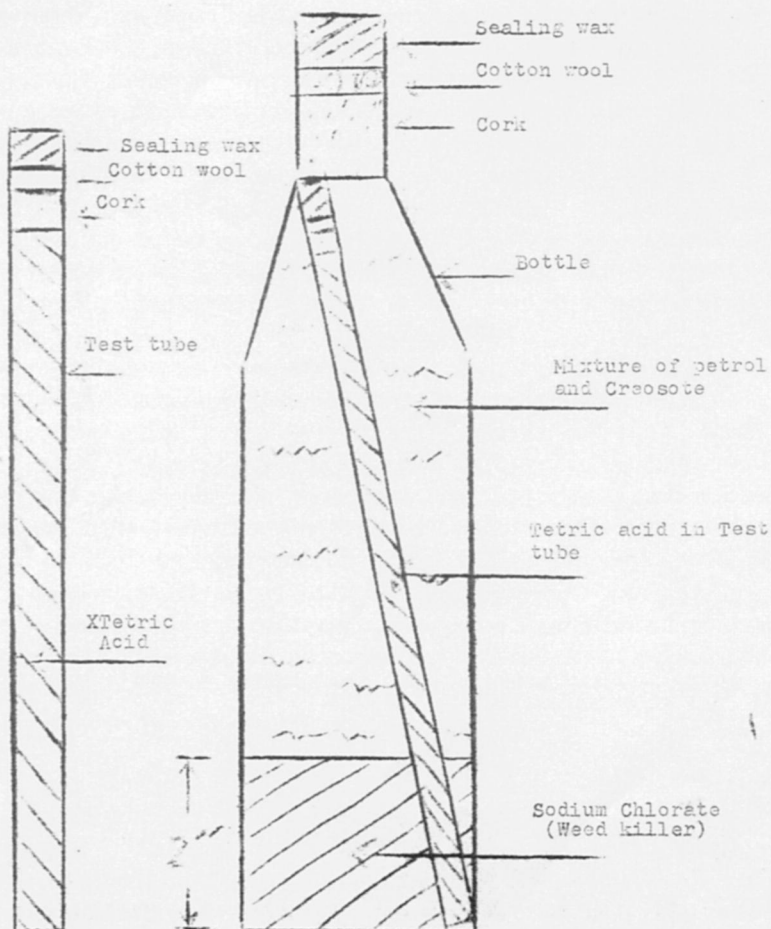
Section 7.

MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

A Molotov Cocktail is an incendiary bomb used for assault purposes. It is simply a chemical filled bottle which ignites when broken. To make a Molotov Cocktail the following items are required:-

1. Large mineral bottle
2. Petrol
3. Cresote
4. Sodium chlorate
5. Test tube of Tetric Acid
6. Sealing wax
7. Corks
8. Cotton wool

Construction as in scetch.



‘fight for freedom is a class struggle. It cannot be divorced from the fight for better housing or working conditions . . . the Republican army, north and south, must become the Army of the People in fact as well as name.’⁴⁸ Shortly afterwards, an American-owned trawler was blown up by the IRA at Rossaveal, Co. Galway.⁴⁹ In July the IRA also carried out a grenade attack on an RUC patrol in the Lower Falls area of Belfast, and in October the IRA in Portmagee, Co. Kerry burnt out a bus during a local school dispute. During the same month the IRA placed a bomb under a landlord’s car in Dalkey, Co. Dublin. He had been targeted because of clashes with housing campaigners. In November 1968 the Gardaí intercepted a group of IRA members on their way to burn a German-owned farmhouse in Meath.⁵⁰

An tOglach was clear that there was no contradiction between social agitation and military force. It stressed that the IRA:

must have men that are capable of leading the people in an armed struggle . . . of this last let there be no doubt, there will be an armed struggle against the forces who are at present in control of this country. This is a time of preparation. This generation must work harder, longer, and be even more dedicated and more ruthless than past generations. We have had too many attempts and failures. For us the timeworn phrase ‘better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all’ is out of date. For this generation, nothing less than success will do.⁵¹

Though a limited source by virtue of its rarity, *An tOglach* provides a interesting counterpoint to the dominant view of the 1960s IRA as a movement turning away from military force and adopting a ‘reformist’ or ‘Stalinist’ brand of socialism.⁵²

Brian Hanley

Notes

- 1 The 1965 editions are titled *An t-Oglac*; those from 1967-68 *An tOglach*. The latter is used throughout this article for the sake of consistency.
- 2 B. Hanley, *The IRA, 1926-1936* (Dublin, 2002) pp. 13, 161; A. Bryson (ed.), *The Insider-the Belfast Prison Diaries of Eamonn Boyce* (Dublin, 2007) p. 13.
- 3 Scán MacStiofáin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London, 1975); R.H. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour: a Biographical and Autobiographical Account of the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 2006).
- 4 Shane MacThomáis, ‘Out of the Ashes arose the Provisionals’, *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 6 January 2005; Roy Garland, *Irish News*, 24 October 2005 and 31 July 2006; Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939* (Oxford, 2002) p. 200.
- 5 R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989) p. 589.
- 6 *An tOglach*, January 1965, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) HA/32/2/13, and *An tOglach*, October/November 1967, author’s possession (1967-68 editions, courtesy of Mick Ryan).
- 7 *An tOglach*, January 1965.
- 8 *An tOglach*, January 1965.
- 9 *United Irishman*, February, March, April, July, August, November 1965.
- 10 *An tOglach*, January 1965
- 11 Goulding’s Army Council colleagues included ‘Rasputin’, ‘Clancy’, ‘Nolan’ and ‘Prior.’
- 12 *An tOglach*, May 1965, PRONI HA/32/2/13.
- 13 Mac Stiofáin, *Memoirs*, p. 92-3.
- 14 *An tOglach*, May 1965, PRONI HA/32/2/13.
- 15 *ibid.*, June 1965, PRONI HA/32/2/13.
- 16 *ibid.*, June 1965.
- 17 *ibid.* Similar points on Derry were made by the Wolfe Tone Society in *Tuairisc*, July 1965.
- 18 *ibid.*, January 1965.
- 19 *ibid.*, June 1965.
- 20 Department of Justice, ‘Review of Unlawful and Allied Organizations, December 1 1964 to November 21, 1966’, JUS 98/6/495, National Archives of Ireland (NAI); *Irish Times*, 20 April 1966; *Irish Independent*, 10 May 1966.
- 21 *Republican Educational Bulletin*, January 1966.

- 22 *Irish Democrat*, May 1966; *United Irishman*, July 1966.
- 23 Mick Ryan, interview with the author.
- 24 *An tOglach*, October/November 1967.
- 25 *ibid.*
- 26 Captured copy read into Stormont *Hansard*, 13 June 1968.
- 27 *An tOglach*, Easter 1968.
- 28 *Irish Times*, 14 and 26 August 1967.
- 29 *ibid.*, 17 October 1967.
- 30 *An tOglach*, December 1967.
- 31 *ibid.*, December 1967.
- 32 *ibid.*, Easter 1968.
- 33 *ibid.*, October/November 1967.
- 34 Author interview with an IRA volunteer active in England during the 1960s.
- 35 *An tOglach*, Easter 1968.
- 36 *United Irishman*, September 1968.
- 37 *Republican Educational Manual*, Vol. III, October 1967.
- 38 *United Irishman*, May and July 1968.
- 39 *An tOglach*, December 1967 and Easter 1968.
- 40 *ibid.*, Easter 1968.
- 41 *ibid.*, December 1967.
- 42 *ibid.*, December 1967.
- 43 *ibid.*, December 1967.
- 44 *ibid.*, Easter 1968.
- 45 *ibid.*, December 1967.
- 46 *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 May 1967; *United Irishman*, June 1967 and February 1968.
- 47 *Irish Times*, 30 May 1968.
- 48 *United Irishman*, July 1968.
- 49 *United Irishman*, September 1968.
- 50 Department of Justice report, 18 March 1969, D/J 2000/36/3, NAI.
- 51 *An tOglach*, December 1967.
- 52 See among others J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (London, 1995), pp. 66-67; M. Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster: a History* (London, 2000), p.419.